



**Discipleship** **Ideas for the Iowa District West**

**Introduction**

The following “Discipleship Ideas” from the readings are not intended for any other purpose than to provide ideas of application from each reading that may be included in the taught and preached Word for this particular Sunday to help teach a life of discipleship. L.C.M.S. pastors are gifted at preaching Law and Gospel, but often lack in the matter of personal applications to the Word. This tool is for no other reason than to offer some seeds of thought to do that.

**THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR - SERIES C**  
November 20, 2016

**From C.P.H. About the Cover:** Today, we are reminded of why we ready our hearts for the coming of our Savior King, the one who calls us His own, who willingly dies for us. God, who rules His creation for our benefit, loves us and sends His Son to save us from the guilt and stain of our sins. Crucified for us, Christ then rose from the dead. And the story starts anew.

**First Reading: Malachi 3:13-18**

<sup>13</sup>“Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ <sup>14</sup>You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?’ <sup>15</sup>And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.”

<sup>16</sup>Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. <sup>17</sup>“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.

<sup>18</sup>Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading Discipleship Notes:** One verse of this reading seems to highlight an important issue. Many believers wonder why unbelievers prosper and they do not. This derails them from what is important. Faith and salvation trump everything else. Our prosperity comes or it doesn’t, but

God is the giver of all things. This is a truth we must remember. The highlight of this reading comes in the fact that the disciple of Christ is a treasured possession of God, but according to verse 18, we must question if there is currently a clear distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous? In the western culture, the difference cannot be clearly seen. Lives appear no different between those who serve God and those who do not. This has been the case over and over throughout the history of the Church, but it is clearly a sign of the present age and as modern disciples of Christ we can, by the grace of God, make marks of distinction in the world around us in our conversation, our actions, our morality, our charity and charitable lifestyle. Because God's grace works in the heart of the believer, there can be a definite distinction especially in the final days of this world's history.

### **Epistle Reading            Colossians 1:13–20**

<sup>13</sup>He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: This reading for the final Sunday of the Church year focuses entirely on Christ who delivered us from the domain of darkness, is the image of the invisible God, before all things, etc. We are the reconciled on earth who were made at peace with God through Christ's shedding of blood on the cross. There seems to be little or no application for our lives in this text. Therefore we need to import application. This is the final Sunday of the Church year. At this time we gaze at the reality that the time of Christ's return is at hand. How vital it is, therefore, that all the world recognizes who Christ is and what He has done for all mankind. An appropriate application might be that we consider the importance of mission work in the Church so that all people might realize the preeminence of Christ and the reconciliation He has brought to the world. By God's grace, mission work continues in this world, but also by God's grace modern disciples can be an integral part of that mission through their lives of service and generous giving.

### **Gospel Reading            Luke 23:27–43**

<sup>27</sup>And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. <sup>28</sup>But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. <sup>29</sup>For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' <sup>30</sup>Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' <sup>31</sup>For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

<sup>32</sup>Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. <sup>33</sup>And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup>And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. <sup>35</sup>And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" <sup>36</sup>The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup>and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" <sup>38</sup>There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

<sup>39</sup>One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" <sup>40</sup>But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" <sup>41</sup>And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." <sup>42</sup>And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." <sup>43</sup>And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Gospel Discipleship Notes: Is it strange that for the final Sunday of the Church Year this Gospel takes us to Calvary? Not really! Calvary's events are the reason the Church has a mission today. There our Savior died as a ransom for the sins of the world. There peace was made with God through the blood of the Savior of all mankind. We can weep for the days we are experiencing today which are filled with violence, unrest, wars, pestilence, persecution, etc. But we can also rejoice in the salvation we have received as a gift from God. We are assured of paradise and because so, our lives need not merely mourn the present day, but because of God's grace we can rejoice in that which lies ahead. One day Jesus will point to us and say, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" and unlike that criminal to whom Jesus spoke who had very little time on earth to rejoice in that great blessing, we have each day to do so. An application of this text therefore might be that as modern disciples, we not only mourn the sinful condition of our lives and this world, but also we rejoice that we are a part of His Kingdom and seek to find ways in which others might also be drawn to Christ as that criminal was on that day at Calvary.

## Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

### Read First Reading: Malachi 3:13–18

<sup>13</sup>“Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ <sup>14</sup>You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? <sup>15</sup>And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.”

<sup>16</sup>Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. <sup>17</sup>“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.

<sup>18</sup>Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.”

1. How do God’s people speak against God today?
2. Is there yet today the attitude that it is vain to serve God? If so, how?
3. What does it mean to put God to the test and escape?
4. What are the words of hope and promise in this reading?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

### Read Colossians 1:13–20

<sup>13</sup>He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

6. What does it mean to you personally to have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ where we have redemption and forgiveness of sins?
7. What is meant by the phrase, “He is the image of the invisible God”?
8. How is Christ connected in the reading to the concerns of the first article of the Apostle’s Creed and therefore to the work of God the Father Almighty?

9. Having just come off an election in the United States, how is the second half of verse 16 reconciled to what we have experienced and what this verse conveys?
10. What does it mean that Christ is the head of His body, the Church?
11. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

**Read: Luke 23:27–43**

<sup>27</sup>And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. <sup>28</sup>But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. <sup>29</sup>For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' <sup>30</sup>Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' <sup>31</sup>For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

<sup>32</sup>Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. <sup>33</sup>And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup>And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. <sup>35</sup>And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" <sup>36</sup>The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup>and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" <sup>38</sup>There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

<sup>39</sup>One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" <sup>40</sup>But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? <sup>41</sup>And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." <sup>42</sup>And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." <sup>43</sup>And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

12. What did Jesus mean about weeping "for yourselves and for your children"?
13. What is meant by verse 31?
14. In His few words of communication, Jesus pleaded for the forgiveness of those who did not know what they were doing. What does this say about our God?
15. What comfort do our Savior's words to the criminal who sought Christ's mercy offer you personally?
16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

## Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline (Leader's Guide)

### Read First Reading: Malachi 3:13–18

<sup>13</sup>"Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' <sup>14</sup>You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? <sup>15</sup>And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.'"

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<sup>18</sup>Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

1. How do God's people speak against God today?

*Answers will vary since we can identify all kinds of ways in which people view God as unfair, unloving, intolerant, etc.*

2. Is there yet today the attitude that it is vain to serve God? If so, how?

*Yes there is yet today and attitude that it is vain to serve God especially when we see the unbeliever assumedly experiencing the better life than the believer, receiving greater earthly rewards, etc. There is also the attitude often expressed in the Church that there has been all kinds of service rendered in the Church and now appreciation or reward for that.*

3. What does it mean to put God to the test and escape?

*Those that work wickedness tempt God by arrogant sins; they test God, whether he can and will punish them as he has said in his word. Those that tempt God in such a manner are many times both delivered out of the adversity and advanced to the prosperity which they were utterly unworthy of. We see this today as God's people saw it in the ancient days.*

4. What are the words of hope and promise in this reading?

*They are found in verses 17-18*

5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

### Read: Colossians 1:13–20

<sup>13</sup>He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

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things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

6. What does it mean to you personally to have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ where we have redemption and forgiveness of sins?

*Answers will vary.*

7. What is meant by the phrase, “He is the image of the invisible God”?

*This phrase refers to the person of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Paul wanted everyone to be clear on the person of Christ, and took all occasions to speak of him and who he is. He speaks of him distinctly as God. This is Paul’s point. He is the image of the invisible God. Not as man was made in the image of God, but as the express image of his person, Heb. 1:3. He is so the image of God as the son is the image of his father, who has a natural likeness to him; so that he who has seen him has seen the Father, and his glory was the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, Jn. 1:14; 14:9.*

8. How is Christ connected in the reading to the concerns of the first article of the Apostle’s Creed and therefore to the work of God the Father Almighty?

*In verse 16 Paul points to Christ’s connection to the work of creation, the specific work ascribed to God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. Since Christ Jesus is one with the Father, by whom all things were made, and the Holy Spirit, Paul was connecting Christ to the Father in this phrase and clarifying that God is One God yet three distinct persons.*

9. Having just come off an election in the United States, how is the second half of verse 16 reconciled to what we have experienced and what this verse conveys?

*It is indeed a fact that God has established earthly rule and authority. While this is the case it is clear that those who run earthly rule and authority in government are like us, sinners in need of God’s grace and mercy. It is the duty of the government to rule justly and properly pertaining to the matters of the state. This is part of God’s great providence. The fact that sinners are chosen in whatever manner to lead and run the government does not diminish the fact that an earthly government is a God established order.*

10. What does it mean that Christ is the head of His body, the Church?

*God has also established His Church on earth and while it also is governed in the many denominations of the Church by sinful people, it is Christ and His teachings and doctrine that drives the Church on its mission to make salvation known to all the world.*

11. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

**READ: Luke 23:27–43**

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12. What did Jesus mean about weeping "for yourselves and for your children"?

*Weeping for themselves and for their children, they were to do so with an eye to the destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem, which some of them might live to see and share in the calamities, or, at least, their children would. Note, When with an eye of faith we behold Christ crucified we ought to weep, not for him, but for ourselves. We must not be affected with the death of Christ as we are with the death of a common person for whom we mourn. The death of Christ was a thing peculiar; it was his victory and triumph over his enemies; it was our deliverance and the purchase of eternal life for us. And therefore we are to weep, not for him, but for our own sins, and the sins of our children, that were the cause of his death; and weep for fear of the miseries we shall bring upon ourselves because of our sin.*

13. What is meant by verse 31?

*Some think that this is borrowed from Eze. 20:47 but these words may be applied, more particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ here foretold, and which the Jews by putting him to death brought upon themselves: "If they (the Jews, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) do these things on the green tree, if they do abuse an innocent and excellent person for his good works, how may they expect God to deal with them for their so doing, who have made themselves a dry tree, a corrupt and wicked generation, and good for nothing? If this be their sin, what do you think will be their punishment?"*

14. In His few words of communication, Jesus pleaded for the forgiveness of those who did not know what they were doing. What does this say about our God?

*This says about our God that He is indeed merciful and compassionate, not desiring the eternal death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his evil ways and be saved through faith in the Christ of Calvary where He paid for the sins of the whole world.*

15. What comfort do our Savior's words to the criminal who sought Christ's mercy offer you personally?

*Answers will vary.*

16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

## Discipleship Bulletin Blub

Today brings us to the end of the Church Year. We have prepared to receive Christ in Advent, celebrated His coming at Christmas, rejoiced in how He made Himself known to the world as the Savior in Epiphany, prepared to walk with Him to the cross in Lent, ecstatically celebrated His Resurrection from the dead at Easter, watched Him ascend and looked forward to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and spent the past 27 weeks of Pentecost seeing how the Church has moved from a few disciples to a multitude of saints who are also sinners called to grow in grace and service in His kingdom. Today brings and end to it all and we begin it all over once again. What does it all mean to you? As modern disciples, it means that we struggle with earthly justice, we focus our attention on Christ Jesus and who He is, and finally that we weep for ourselves and our sin and look to the cross alone where we find forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus' name. Then we make that great grace known to the world.

## Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, fill us with a deep understanding and appreciation of the justice You have for sinners and of the mercy You have shown to the world in sending Your dear Son to be our Savior. Help us always to know who Christ is and what He has done for us and then, by Your grace, move us to make Him known to the world. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**